CLIC PAPERS

OPERATIONAL ART IN LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

Army - Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict

Langley Air Force Base, Virginia

OPERATIONAL ART
IN
LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

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CLIC PAPERS

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PREFACE

This paper applies the concepts of operational art to low intensity conflict (LIC). It does not attempt to provide a "cookbook approach" to the subject but rather a construct designed to provoke thought on the part of the reader and hopefully assist in formulating other ideas and opinions concerning that application. A comparison of Soviet and US applications of the concept provides the framework for analysis with emphasis on the major concepts of operational design (centers of gravity, lines of operation, sequels, branches, and culminating points). In applying these concepts, the basic tenets of AirLand Battle doctrine together with appropriate principles of war are developed within the context of LIC.

Meeting the evolving challenges of LIC requires new perspectives. The accompanying paradigm, or framework of thought, involves a distinctly new way of thinking about old problems. To effectively apply the concept of operational art to LIC requires the application of this paradigm. In fact, the authors believe the challenge which faces the US military in the future is the requirement to cope with multiple paradigms. One lies within the context of conventional combat, and another, within LIC. This paper focuses on the latter. The inspiration for this paper was provided by Major General Wilson A. Shoffner during his tenure as Deputy Chief of Staff for Doctrine, US Army Training and Doctrine Command. During this assignment, he served as a member of the General Officer Executive Council to the Army-Air Force Center for Low Intensity Conflict.

OPERATIONAL ART IN LOW INTENSITY CONFLICT

Operational art is defined as the linkage between strategic guidance and tactical execution of orders. Its essence is the orchestration of functionally disparate elements in the pursuit of fulfilling strategic objectives through specific tactical activities. Applying the linking function of operational art in low intensity conflict (LIC) includes factors beyond those traditionally involved in conventional war. Beyond the hardware and personnel of mechanistic elements, LIC integrates such power elements at a lower relative level of intensity and symmetry with such fluid dimension and form as psychological, intelligence, police activity, and civic administration. Many or all of one's own government departments and agencies may be linked, often acting with or through a host nation or other national-international entity. Implied is a component of creativity, flexibility, and spontaneity. Although no particular echelon of command is uniquely concerned with operational planning, the theater commander's immediate subordinates usually conduct it.

To assist in understanding operational art in the US armed forces' mission as it relates to LIC, it is helpful to consider potential US responses within the context of four general categories. These categories are: peacekeeping, peacetime contingency operations, combatting terrorism, and insurgency and counterinsurgency.(1) Although general categories, they are not mutually exclusive and often overlap. For example, a peacekeeping force should take antiterrorist precautions to protect the force, and a peacetime contingency operation may be executed as a result of a terrorist incident. Likewise, humanitarian support can help prevent an impoverished region from falling into insurgent control.

The degree to which doctrine and operational planning in the conventional sense is applicable to LIC varies with the category. That applicability is based upon those factors, or series of factors, beyond which it may be traditionally applied in conventional war. For example, some categories more readily lend themselves to an analysis using the concepts of operational design (centers of gravity, lines of operation, sequels, branches, and culminating points) than others. Forces conducting peacekeeping have a center of gravity which may be their credibility as an impartial force between the belligerents. When that credibility is lost, they become simply another armed force in the conflict area and cease to be a peacekeeping force. Yet, the sequential nature of operations in a traditional campaign may be absent or minimal in peacekeeping, and the entire activity viewed as an operation.

Similarly peacetime contingency operations could be a major operation in support of a larger campaign or simply a response to a particular incident. Some of the prevalent operations or activities within this category are:(2)

- o crisis intelligence operations
- o humanitarian assistance
- o noncombatant evacuation
- o security assistance surges
- o shows of force and demonstrations
- o raids and attacks
- o rescue and recovery operations
- o support to US civil authorities

Several of these operations involve short-term, rapid projection or employment of forces oriented on an adversary's specific center of gravity. While various lines of operation or courses of action may be considered at the outset, often the immediacy of the event dictate a direct rather than indirect approach. With respect to operational planning, a correlation exists between certain peacetime contingency operations and strategic targeting of Special Operation Forces (SOF) in the deep area of conventional conflict. An Armed Forces Journal International article on strategic targeting by SOF described this correlation:

> The rapid and systematic interdiction of strategic enemy war-making assets in support of theater or national objectives by small special operations units or guerrilla warfare can efficiently and effectively produce debilitating "friction" for the enemy. This can occur in short or protracted wars across the conflict spectrum, including struggles against international organizations which perpetrate terrorism, smuggling, and piracy, as well as against the nations that sponsor and encourage them.(3)

The relationship between terrorism and insurgency and counterinsurgency is often blurred. Insurgents often use terrorism against a government and its people to further their ideals. Likewise, what may begin as a campaign by urban terrorists can develop into a country-wide insurgency. Globally, groups can use strategic terrorism (often supported by belligerent states) to further their ethno-nationalistic goals. Although a terrorist group's centers of gravity may be operational security, some international groups gain their strength and will to fight from religious fervor. In and of itself, terrorism conducts a direct action against a target, but usually it is strategically designed to indirectly alter the actions or ideas of a government or governments.

While insurgency and counterinsurgency may be the category most visualized in operational planning, it is not the only one so applicable. Thus in the discussion which follows, the reader

will see references to operational art relative to LIC predominantly within the context of insurgency and counterinsurgency; however, such application can only be the result of the factors involved in the individual category and the unique aspects of the particular scenario. For example, when considering operational art in LIC relative to a region, echelons between the theater-level Commander-in-Chief (CINC) and the lowest tactical level often do not exist or are minimal, and therefore commanders and their staffs have to accomplish operational planning. First of all, the CINC and his staff must conduct planning in greater detail; so must the tactical commander, the Ambassador, and the entire Country Team.

Aside from its attention to greater detail, this operational planning differs from conventional combat planning in several ways. For example, Figure 1 shows how role delineation becomes much less distinct in LIC. Here the seams between strategic, operational and tactical levels are less discernible; constraints on US activities are more complex; objectives are overlapping, and planning horizons paradoxically are extended. Of course, these vary with each category. For example, one might conclude the operational focus is broad for insurgency and counterinsurgency but substantially narrower for peacekeeping. Likewise planning horizons for a peacetime contingency operation may be days, weeks, or months, but months, years, or even decades for an insurgency and counterinsurgency. This broader and less precise operational perspective is illustrated in an insurgency

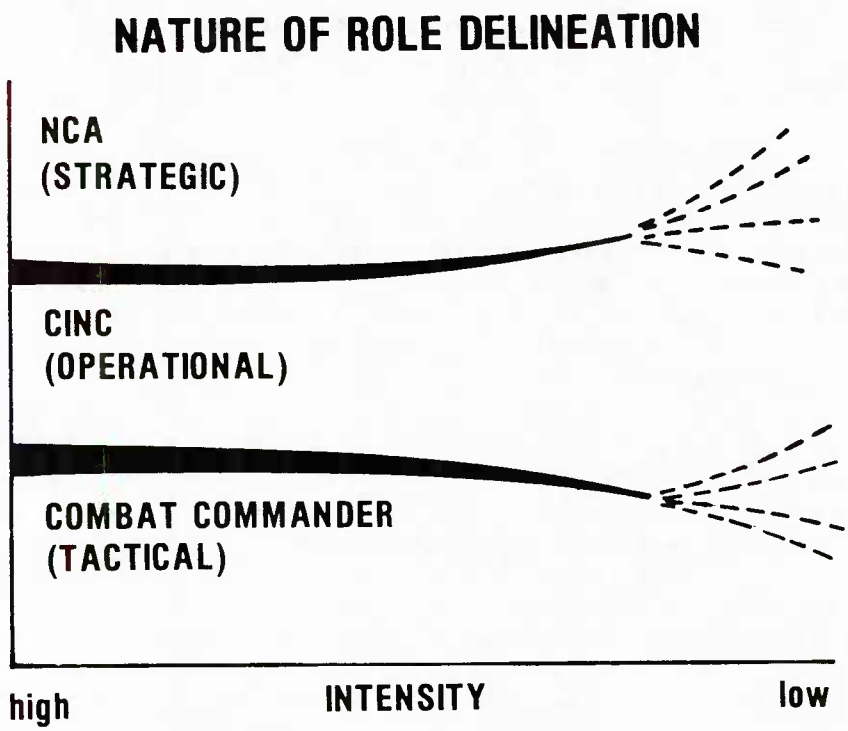

FIGURE 1

and counterinsurgency where a requirement exists for the CINCs, Ambassadors, and Country Teams to establish close working contacts with numerous regional groups within such US agencies as State, Agriculture, Justice, and others. The CINC and his staff must also focus on concerns of each Ambassador and his Country Team, even though in more conventional conflicts such detailed considerations would fall into the tactical sphere. Delegation to lower echelons is also far more frequent.

While a CINC is concerned with regions, he is also operationally concerned with the strategy of individual nations, which include areas of influence and concerns contiguous to their countries. Point (A) in Figure 2 depicts how the CINC must alter his operational focus to take into consideration the strategy of individual nations. He must insure broad US national interests are integrated with the plans of a region, subregion, or individual country and must also cooperate with the Ambassador and Country Team. From a US perspective, this would normally come under the tactical level in conventional conflict and would equate to point (B), which is the individual country's operational level. The special dilemma of LIC is that very casual events or incidents or data often have an impact in the realm of politics far beyond the relative scale of context. Examples of this level are province, brigade, or battalion task force. Therefore, the challenge in applying operational art to LIC is to tailor the planning process for employment at the tier of planning between US national strategy and the country's tactical level actions.

Military strategy, operational art, and tactics are the broad divisions of activity necessary to prepare for and conduct war. Military strategy, as defined by Army FM 100-5 (Operations), is:

> The art and science of employing the armed forces of a nation or alliance to secure policy objectives by the application or threat of force. Military strategy sets the fundamental conditions of operations to wage war or to deter war by establishing goals in theaters of operations, assigning forces, providing assets, and imposing conditions on the use of force.(4)

The theater, Air component, Army, and Corps level commanders who are involved with conducting campaigns and major operations translate strategy into the more specific actions of operational planning. So, the work of the operational planner is not unlike that of a conductor who takes a musical composition and translates it into a symphony. He may use the key concepts of operational design in striving to reach strategic goals, to phase the sequence of actions required to produce those conditions, and, finally, to apply the proper resources to accomplish those actions.

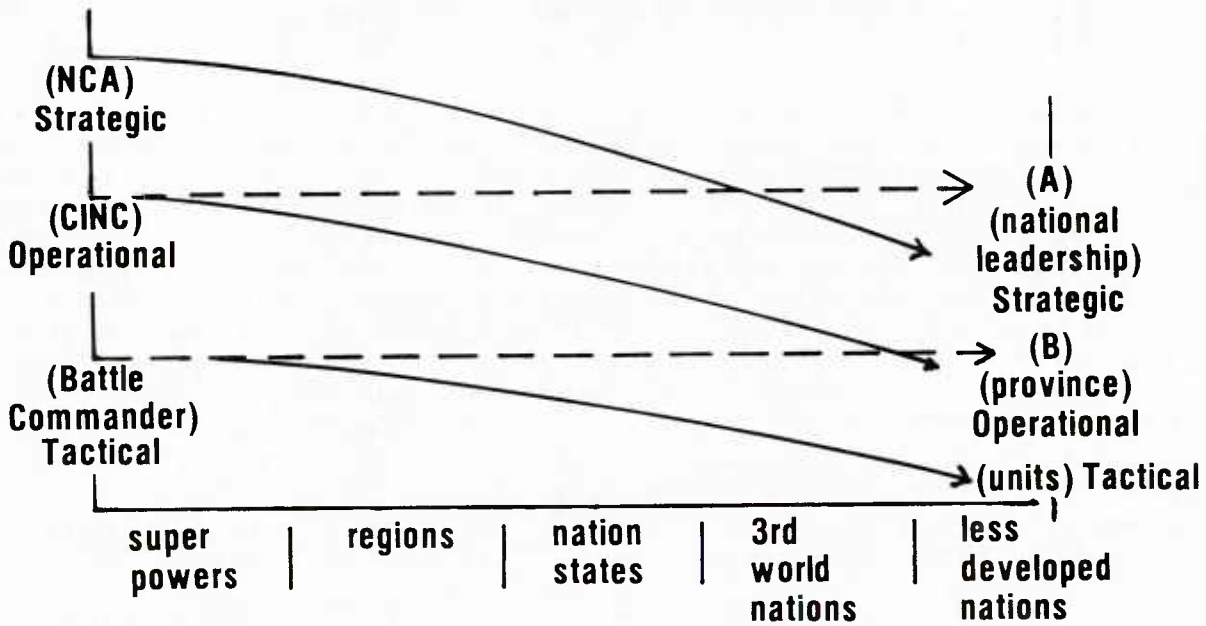

FIGURE 2

For the military commanders to apply the threat or use of force correctly, they must understand the political, economic, and social environment of LIC. The broader concept of national strategy, defined by JCS Pub 1 as "the art and science of developing and using the political, economic, and psychological powers of a nation, together with its armed forces, during peace and war, to secure national objectives,"(5) provides the basis for understanding the environment for conducting operational planning in LIC. Some believe operational art is nothing more than strategy by another name. Clausewitz described the relationship of strategy to what is currently considered operational art:

> Strategy is the use of the engagement for the purpose of the war. The strategist must therefore define an aim for the entire operational side of the war that will be in accordance with the purpose. In other words, he will draft the plan of the war, and the aim will determine the series of actions intended to achieve it: he will, in fact, shape the individual campaigns and, within these decide on the individual engagements. Since most of these matters have to be based on assumptions that may not prove correct, while other, more detailed orders cannot be determined in advance at all, it follows that the strategist must go on campaign himself . . . . This

> has not always been the accepted view, at least so far as the general principle is concerned. It used to be the custom to settle strategy in the capital, and not in the field--a practice that is acceptable only if the government stays so close to the army as to function as general headquarters.(6)

In an effort to show how our national strategy is evolving, a recent article saw "strategic guidance" as "the link" between the national command authority and "the operational commanders." In theory, according to this article, such guidance should "contain a balanced blend of ends (objectives), ways (concepts), and means (resources)."(7) Henry Kissinger, in the same article, observed that while, in the past, strategists mainly worked to mass superior forces, now they more frequently strive to marshal wisely what strength they have to gain the objectives they desire.(8) Recently this concept has been referred to by Secretary of Defense Weinberger as "competitive strategy" when approached from a US perspective.(9) It is the application of a nation's strength against an adversary's weakness. Perhaps this idea was discussed by the Soviet Politburo in the past and served to formulate their current approach to operational art in LIC.

Regardless, a comparison of Soviet and US applications of operational art can help to gain an understanding of its use in LIC. The Soviet focus for combat planning is on the theater of military operations (TVD). At this level, the field commanders translate strategic goals into operational tasks which flow down to the operational forces as orders. The Soviets measure success by the progress of operational forces in accomplishing the military tasks which support strategic goals; they do not necessarily judge success in terms of the achievements of tactical forces. The traditional US view of success, however, requires tactical forces be successful for operational forces supporting strategic goals to be successful. Without a clearly developed campaign plan or major operation plan, a combatant could win a series of battles and engagements that would have no decisive effect on the final outcome of the conflict. Both the design of the campaign plan (operational art) and its tactical execution must be successful.

Identifying Strength and Balance

Operational art is the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war, or theater of operations, through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations. The US view of operational art encompasses fundamental decisions about where to fight and whether to accept or decline battle. The essence of it is the identification and destruction of the enemy's operational centers of gravity--his sources of strength or balance--and the concentration against these centers of superior power that seems most likely to achieve a decisive result.(10)

Traditionally, the Soviets have applied operational art beyond the bounds of conventional conflict by concentrating on the correlations between economic power, scientific capability, and moral and political strength of the belligerent states. The emphasis has been on such direct or indirect actions against the adversary as: disrupting his monetary system, separating him from his trading partners (who possess natural resources or inexpensive labor), using overt or covert operations to disorient, discredit, or gain technological information (to reduce any advantage he may have), weakening the will, cohesion and morale of his population relative to the struggle, and weakening the moral fiber of his nation (through such actions as disinformation campaigns or other psychological operations).

While the guidance for such programs could come from various levels, theoretically a Soviet bloc campaign aimed at the west may conduct the low intensity campaign either from Cuba or Moscow. Currently, the Soviets have only one combat brigade located in Cuba and therefore have to make use of such surrogate forces as those of Cuba or Nicaragua. To offset the economic power and scientific potential of the US and to reduce its moral and political power may be their purposes. They do not try to confront US forces directly but to make gains at the margin of US spheres of influence.

The Soviets' TVD commander directs his actions against US strategic centers of gravity, which are the tangible or intangible forces from which derive sources of strength or balance. They include the characteristics, capability, or location of the nation which permit freedom of action, physical strength, or will to fight.(11) For example, the location of the US (surrounded by oceans or allies) is a strategic center of gravity. Additional examples of US strategic centers of gravity include technological and economic capabilities. Soviet efforts against this concentration of economic power, scientific potential, and moral balance by direct and indirect actions influence the US strategic centers of gravity and the balance of the political and military structure. Indirect means to achieve this are reflected in Soviet moves to isolate geopolitically the mineral and energy resources critical to US security.

Centers of gravity in LIC sittings are more complex and contain more diffuse components which interact. Figure 3 depicts how one can perceive centers of gravity as interrelated columns passing through tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Once commanders have established strategic goals and have identified the enemy's centers of gravity, the application of operational art can establish plans to influence those centers of gravity. Traditionally, the objective in war has been to defeat and to destroy enemy armed forces. While all wars are political in nature, LICs are unique because they concentrate on control of the political-social system with a much lower degree of force and with means relatively less military. Therefore, centers of

gravity in LIC are not necessarily on the battlefield but are in the politico-social system of the country involved.(12)

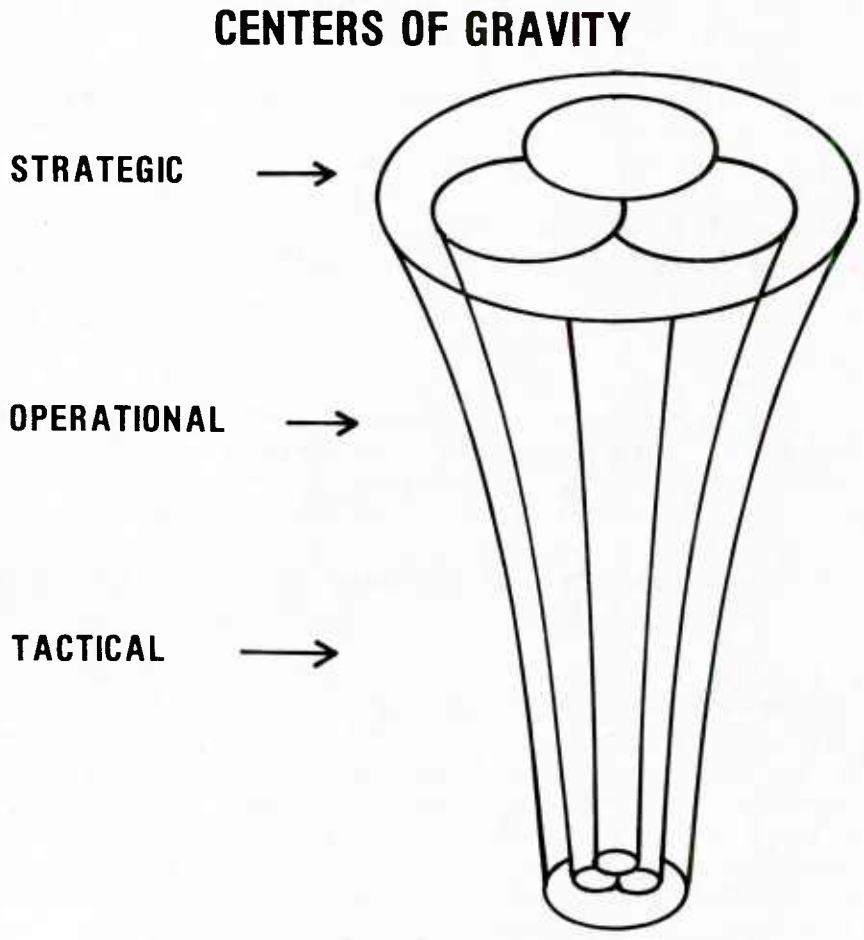

FIGURE 3

Given the importance of insurgency and counterinsurgency in LIC, an analysis of its centers of gravity is appropriate. Within a country, for example, the insurgency begins when the insurgents recognize the time is ripe to overthrow the existing government and to replace it with their own. The government's strategic center of gravity is its "legitimacy to govern," a phrase which means the acceptance of the populace of the rule of the government as legal, proper, and binding. The insurgents are attempting to destroy this legitimacy and enforce their will on the populace. One of the characteristics which possibly distinguishes insurgency and counterinsurgency from other forms of warfare is the phenomenon of "shared" centers of gravity, i.e., an insurgency situation in which the opposing forces gain their strength from the same centers of gravity. If these centers of gravity are, in fact, shared, whatever one opponent

does to strengthen his center of gravity weakens that of his opponent. Conversely, the degree which an adversary is capable of diminishing (through destruction or informational combat) an opponent's center of gravity serves to enhance his own. Given these assumptions, one could then expect measures to protect a center of gravity would act de facto to weaken or destroy the opponent's credibility or legitimacy. Thus, the strategic centers of gravity in LIC are in part psychological for they are embedded in the thoughts, views, and will of the people.(13)

Before the government can successfully engage in counterinsurgency, it must recognize the insurgents' centers of gravity. This means not only strategic but operational centers of gravity. The operational centers of gravity taken together are the elements of cohesion; they at least mean the capability to provide security for the country. An insurgent force that has security is capable of successfully influencing the government's centers of gravity and thereby affecting the government's sources of strength and balance. Achieving this recognition requires an understanding of the composition of the insurgent organization. To this end, it is helpful to view the elements of an insurgency as a series of concentric circles. (See Figure 4)

ELEMENTS OF INSURGENCY

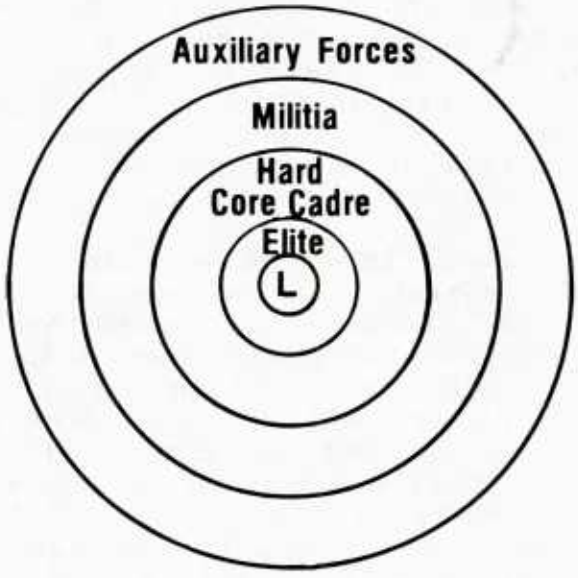

FIGURE 4

While every insurgency is unique, certain elements are usually present: auxiliary forces, militia, hard core cadre, and an elite and leadership. The auxiliary forces are the masses who accomplish the day-to-day tasks required to sustain the movement logistically. They consist of men, women, and children cultivating crops, washing clothes, and cooking food to provide the combatants with basic support. They may even serve as porters carrying supplies to the locations of combat operations. Since they do not always join insurgency of their own volition, they may not be completely loyal to the insurgents. The government's objective should be to separate these auxiliary forces from the insurgency and so isolate the combatants from their support. The center of gravity of the auxiliary forces is their material and psychological well being. Examples of government efforts to attack this center of gravity include various types of psychological operations, highly-visible civil affairs programs, and long-sought government reforms. The government must enable the members of the auxiliary forces to feel they would be better off if they separated themselves from the insurgent movement.

The militia, who represent the major part of the force of combatants, is the next concentric layer in the insurgency circle. This group may also consist of conscripts, but it usually includes those who have joined because of their belief in the basic ideology of the movement. The militia, who conduct a substantial portion of tactical operations, require arms, ammunition, explosives, and basic logistical support provided by the auxiliary forces to be effective. An operational center of gravity of the militia is their logistics support, which, if lost, renders the militia ineffective. Understanding how the militia gains external and internal support and developing an effective counter-infiltration program to interdict that support impacts decisively upon the militia's center of gravity.

The hard core cadre links the militia and auxiliary forces with the elite and leadership of the insurgency. They serve as a network of lower level leaders who understand the movement and have a commitment to its success. They indoctrinate the local population, recruit personnel, obtain supplies, acquire timely intelligence, and help the militia move freely about contested areas. Capable of operating comfortably in a violent environment, they are unlikely to respond to any measure short of force. Usually not responsive to promises of well being, they are prepared to press the fight to the end. Security is an operational center of gravity of all insurgents; however, it is most critical to the hard core insurgents. Eliminating the hard core element means moving against its security center of gravity, and it may require action against the insurgent's ultimate center of gravity--the cohesion of the movement itself.

The value of cohesion as a center of gravity and its relationship between the militia and the hard core cadre has received important consideration in Cohesion--The Human Element in Combat. The author's analysis compared the cohesion in the US, Soviet, Israeli, and North Vietnam Armies (NVA). While the NVA troops were not insurgents in the strict sense, they enjoyed a situation that has relevance for dedicated insurgents. In the words of an NVA soldier in Cohesion:

> The troops in a unit considered the political officer as their mother. This cadre always . . . saw to it the unit was unified. Besides the ideological training, the political cadres also promoted the fighting spirit of the soldiers and took charge of their subsistence, i.e., food and drink, etc. Because of this devotion the troops in a unit liked and respected the political officer very much. Due to such respect and confidence, the troops could always overcome the difficulties in the fighting, as well as in the daily work, carry out thoroughly the orders of the cadres and achieve good results for the unit.(14)

The control of the NVA over the Vietcong forces was not unlike that of the hard core cadre element over the militia components in other movements. This control enabled them to achieve congruence between group norms and organizational objectives.

The final element of the insurgent movement is the elite and leadership. This group, often well-educated and from the upper socio-economic classes, provides the political and intellectual focus of the movement. Their mission is to furnish the political credibility of the movement and to undermine the legitimacy of the government. Their centers of gravity may be political reform, the assumption of political control, and possibly, the charisma of the leadership itself. Government actions usually consist of political efforts to co-opt the leadership. If co-option fails, an effective psychological program to discredit them is often a viable alternative.

Attempting to overcome the insurgent force without considering the social and economic problems which permit the insurgency to flourish is like treating the symptom rather than the disease. Disrupting the insurgents as a fighting force may affect the balance of the entire movement, but it alone will not resolve the problem. The overcoming of the insurgent force would be an example of an operational or tactical objective, while the amelioration of the underlying causes of the instability through economic development and promotion of democratic, social, and political order would be the primary strategic goal.

Actions Against Strength and Balance

A linkage exists between tactical, operational, and strategic centers of gravity. To address these inter-connected centers of gravity requires a systematic and comprehensive campaign plan. Rarely are centers of gravity in LIC susceptible to direct attack. If they are tangible in nature--such as the German ball-bearing factories of Schweinfurt in the conventional war context of WW II--efforts of direct attack are feasible. However, the enemy is usually sensitive about his own center of gravity, and he will usually protect it closely. Therefore, indirect means will be required to force him to expose it to attack.(15) Employing indirect means requires an understanding of seemingly isolated tactical and operational activities that lead to fulfillment of operational objectives and, in turn, impact strategic centers of gravity. A commander, after making an estimate of a particular situation, makes a decision to pursue a particular line of action. This, in turn, will lead to another situation (either better or worse than before) and another decision. This process can be viewed as a decision tree which has branches (or groups of decisions), some of which, if properly pursued, lead to the accomplishment of established objectives.

When moving against these objectives, only a fractional amount of the total resources available is involved at any one time. More important, the sequential nature of planning requires commanders to conduct concurrent operations. That is, while executing operation(s), the commander must simultaneously posture and prepare for subsequent operations. Posturing for subsequent operations is difficult to accomplish. Staffs tend to focus on immediacy during crisis. When such activities are conducted effectively, the commander considers the myriad of outcomes to an operation and chooses to pursue either optimum or less optimum branches at the outset in hopes of accomplishing his intermediate objectives and eventually his ultimate objective.

Understanding this correlation of intermediate objectives to centers of gravity and the necessary sequence of indirect operational level actions necessary to attain those objectives is critical to understanding operational art. Movements against intermediate objectives have to strike "lines of operations," which are the directional orientation of a force in relation to its opponent. Traditionally, military leaders have considered the lines of operation to be within the context of physical movement and support of forces. "Exterior" lines of operation converge on the enemy and usually require a substantial advantage of force correlation to succeed, but they offer the opportunity of encirclement of an opponent. "Interior" lines--such as those Germany enjoyed in retreat to defense of the homeland during both world wars--permit a weak force to shift the main effort laterally to meet the most threatening opposing force.(16)

The battle of Dien Bien Phu offers a good example of lines of operation. The French operated on exterior lines, while the Vietminh operated on interior lines and were able to encircle and defeat the French. An example from a different perspective is Soviet activity in Cuba. Soviet support to the regime in Cuba illustrates operations on exterior lines which converge on the enemy. This was apparent during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis when the favorable US force correlation made the Soviets alter their plans. Following the crisis, a period of recoupment occurred until the Soviets possessed sufficient strength to design and execute a new campaign.

In LIC, physical movement of organized military forces and support is only one planning consideration pertaining to lines of operation, and may be a very small part. Others must encompass economic, social, and political forces. Geopolitical considerations for a commander confronted with LIC begin with the Area of Operational Responsibility (AOR), but beyond the AOR are other factors of significant influence--for example, USSOUTHCOM's two major areas of significant influence are the Caribbean Basin and Mexico. The Caribbean Basin outside SOUTHCOM's AOR is of concern because Cuba poses a threat to sea lanes between the US and its allies and also is a guerrilla and terrorist training area exporting insurgency and instability to Latin America. Mexico is of importance in lines of operation because it serves as a cultural and a geographic link between the US and Latin America. In the SOUTHCOM AOR, there are regions and subregions that affect geographic lines of operation at the operational level. Regions that impinge upon this AOR are Brazil, Central America, The Andean Region, and The Southern Cone. In attempting to thwart the regimes in Cuba and Nicaragua, the theater commander must consider the fragile social and political arrangements that exist between these regions and subregions.

Soviet efforts to expand influence throughout Central America provide an excellent example of how insurgent lines of operation can affect a region or a subregion. A US government study of March 1985 outlined several of these insurgent lines of operation in Central America and stated, "Soviet-Bloc countries have played a key role in sending weapons to Cuba and Nicaragua, which in turn have moved them into El Salvador through a complex land, sea, and air infiltration network."(17) The geographical location of countries within a region and their terrain features serve as important determinants for the infiltration "operation" directed against operational centers of gravity.

In conventional combat, there is a period of planning and analysis followed by substantial movement along lines of operation and concentration of forces. The most visible aspect is the physical movement itself. Insurgency, however, often begins with ideas not with physical movement. With these ideas, the insurgents attempt to polarize the attitudes of the people against the government. There may not be physical movement of

forces and support until the people, acting on ideas, are mobilized. Illustrative of this point is that many analyses of insurgencies refer to the later phases or stages of insurgencies as a "War of Movement" or a conventional conflict between forces of the insurgency and those of the government.(18)

Non-physical lines of operation in LIC are usually manifested in themes of psycho-social, economic, or political campaigns over extended periods of time and may occur at many different levels. Examples are attacks on moral centers of gravity or efforts to subvert a government's economic well-being through financial or resource manipulation and narcotics trafficking. From a US perspective, interior lines of operation exist when LIC policy decisions enjoy support of the American public. Conversely, LIC policy decisions which do not have popular backing can be considered to be operating on exterior lines.

Economic and political campaigns are often more effective than military campaigns in LIC. An example of this effectiveness is the direct and indirect actions against an adversary to disturb his monetary system and separate him from his trading partners. Thus, these measures attack the cohesion of the economic center of gravity existing within the country or countries. Another illustration is afforded by an international terrorist campaign against countries throughout a region. Differences in opinion as whether to negotiate a settlement or maintain a hard line toward the terrorists can cause dissension among allies and often carry over to other diplomatic areas.

Factors to Consider

Discussions of traditional lines of operations often focus on the relationship of force strength relative to offensive or defensive operations. A defensive force operating on interior lines can usually withstand an attack from a superior force until the size and capability of the attacking force becomes totally overwhelming. The relationships of offensive and defensive operations, combined with other principles of war, are also critical facets of LIC aside from those of lines of operations. Appendix A provides one author's examination of noted theoreticians' priority order of the principles of war.(19) A review of these theoreticians relative to revolutionary warfare is appropriate. Furthermore, an examination of the relationship of the principles of war to the basic tenets of AirLand Battle (FM 100-5) and of the applicability of the principles and tenants within the context of LIC are worth undertaking.

The late General Morelli, while Deputy Chief of Staff for Doctrine at the US Army Training and Doctrine Command, discussed these basic tenets relative to operational art and LIC in an article for Military Review. He pointed out the key to every military effort was the, "seizure and retention of the initiative."(20) In a conventional war, the initiative is

usually considered as an offensive approach to attaining an objective. Within LIC, the offensive must focus on both combat and non-combat oriented objectives. As pointed out above, to strategically succeed, the insurgent organization must initially adopt an offensive tactical and operational level approach. It must bring the fight to the enemy to impact the government's strategic balance. In the early stages of conflict, the insurgents also enjoy the offensive for another reason--surprise. Surprise is demonstrated by insurgents' capability to attack targets at the time and place of their choosing. If successful, the insurgency evolves into those later phases in which the insurgents defend areas they control. Finally, should the insurgency endure, the insurgents will conduct both tactical defensive and offensive operations against the remaining government strongholds.

The governments' perspective on initiative differs somewhat from the insurgent's. At the strategic level, the objective is to defend the populace and the government from the advance of the insurgents. Tactically and operationally, the government must defend key facilities and groups of facilities while conducting offensive operations to neutralize the insurgents' capability to attack the government.

More important than military actions is the government's initiative regarding its other available national resources. Economic, political, and social offensive actions are necessary to establish legitimacy. The government can accomplish these actions best through the synchronized efforts of numerous organizations and agencies. While synchronization is not listed as a principle of war, such terms as coordination, cooperation, and unity of effort imply the need to synchronize actions and thereby have the right force at the right place at the right time. That is not to say that in LIC a government must coordinate all political, military, and economic actions at all levels prior to their implementation. It does, however, imply that military commanders and civilian decision-makers should recognize the importance of unity of effort in carrying out actions which support national interests and objectives.

Maintaining a clear focus on how to apply available resources from all appropriate organizations is a substantial challenge. This is especially true in LIC when commanders and planners are working with such broad strategic objectives as maintaining the strength and viability of US alliances, dealing effectively with threats to the security of US short of armed conflict, or eliminating, where possible, the root causes of instability. The true craftsman of operational art takes these broad visions and ideals and sharpens them into finite operational goals and objectives. To accomplish this requires an understanding not only of the environment but also of the adversary.

The capability to anticipate alterations in the adversary's lines of operation and adjust to that change or to exploit opportunities created by that change requires agility. Within the context of principles of war, agility is reflected in such terms as speed, mobility, and maneuver. Agility is the first prerequisite to seizing and holding the initiative. On the traditional battlefield, agility can help to overcome the friction--the accumulation of chance errors, unexpected difficulties, and the confusion of battle--which impedes both sides. Seen as much more than a physical quality, it requires individuals from senior commanders to junior bureaucrats to have the mental flexibility to "think on their feet."

Instilling a sense of agility in a LIC is a challenging undertaking. Subtle but rapid changes requiring coordination at several levels within multiple organizations are difficult to achieve. Yet, failure to maintain agility ruins the opportunity to "turn inside of the opponent's decision cycle" and take advantage of destablizing centers of gravity. At the operational level, the capability for multiple organizations to plan and execute concurrent operations rapidly can assist immeasurably in the development of agility. Concurrently preparing and posturing for subsequent operations, while simultaneously executing on-going operations, represents a significant challenge in conventional conflict but involves an even greater undertaking in LIC. Often, it requires the integration of less than optimum US or Third World government resources and requires exertion along less than optimum lines of operation.

In reviewing Appendix A, it is interesting to note that while Mao and Sun Tzu mention offensive action as a principle of war, neither Stalin, Giap, nor Guevara does. Yet, as noted above, the importance of offensive action in revolutionary warfare is crucial and is repeatedly documented in the actions of these revolutionary oriented theoreticians.

Anticipating Change

When considering offensive operations, the relationship between success and failure and the sequence of events which leads to those results require an understanding of culminating points, which according to FM 100-5 are:

> Unless it is strategically decisive, every offensive operation will sooner or later reach a point where the strength of the enemy no longer significantly exceeds that of the defender, and beyond which continued offensive operations therefore risk overextending, counter attack, and defeat.(21)

Examples of strategic level culminating points in conventional war include the German offensives in France in 1914 and Russia in 1941 which both resulted in the loss of momentum,

eventual transition to the defensive, and withdrawal prior to achieving a strategic objective. Operational examples include Patton's rapid advance across France which bogged down for lack of supplies in Lorraine.(22)

Traditionally, the scientific application of correlation of forces of the contending parties' capability to inflict harm on each other has carried great weight. "Force," of course, is a vague and relative concept containing both quantitative and qualitative ingredients. In LIC, economic and political events can overshadow military success and make the arrival of a culmination point even more difficult to discern. For example, consider the 1968 TET offensive. Vietcong losses militarily could have precipitated a culminating point; however, their offensive indirectly resulted in a strategic culminating point for the US. The US had overextended its military effort "in time" and so lost public support for its Vietnam effort.

The terrorist bombing of the Marine Barracks in Lebanon illustrates a tactical offensive action against a US force which had operational ramifications. Politically, the US was on the offensive, but operationally on the defensive, in support of the political initiative for peacekeeping. The terrorists perceived the US as politically over-extended. This was especially apparent after US naval gunfire support of the Lebanese Armed Forces at Suq-Al-Gharb on 13 September 1983. This altered the US peacekeeping center of gravity (credibility of being neutral). The Long Commission, which investigated the events surrounding the Marine barracks bombing, determined "while opinions varied widely on a direct cause and effect linkage," between the naval gunfire support and the barracks bombing, the prevalent view within the US European Command chain of command was "a linkage did exist." The report also pointed out "the public statements of factional leaders confirmed a portion of the Lebanese populace no longer considered the USMNF neutral."(23) Thus, the tactical events of the naval gunfire support and barracks bombing, while not conclusively linked, weighted heavily in the operational culminating point for US involvement in Lebanon.

On the one hand, strategic military culminating points in LIC are seldom reached short of transition to conventional conflict because of the elements of extended time and space. The examples of insurgencies in Table A reflect this long-term nature.

TABLE A

Indo China I	1946-54
Malaya	1948-60
Indo-China II	1962-75
Algeria	1954-62
Cuba	1956-59
Zimbabwe	1969-79

On the other hand, an extended insurgency may involve several operational level culminating points. Some experts see these as aspects of the cyclical nature of insurgency. Such a cycle developed in Guatemala where government forces have attempted to neutralize Marxist-led insurgents since 1962. Now into its second generation of insurgents, the conflict has seen periods of heightened violence followed by those of relative peace. In their 1985 National War College student research report, Colonels Johnson and Russell outlined the phased development of insurgency throughout Central America. Their work, displayed in Figure 5, shows some of the operational culminating points for insurgencies in El Salvador and Guatemala.(24)

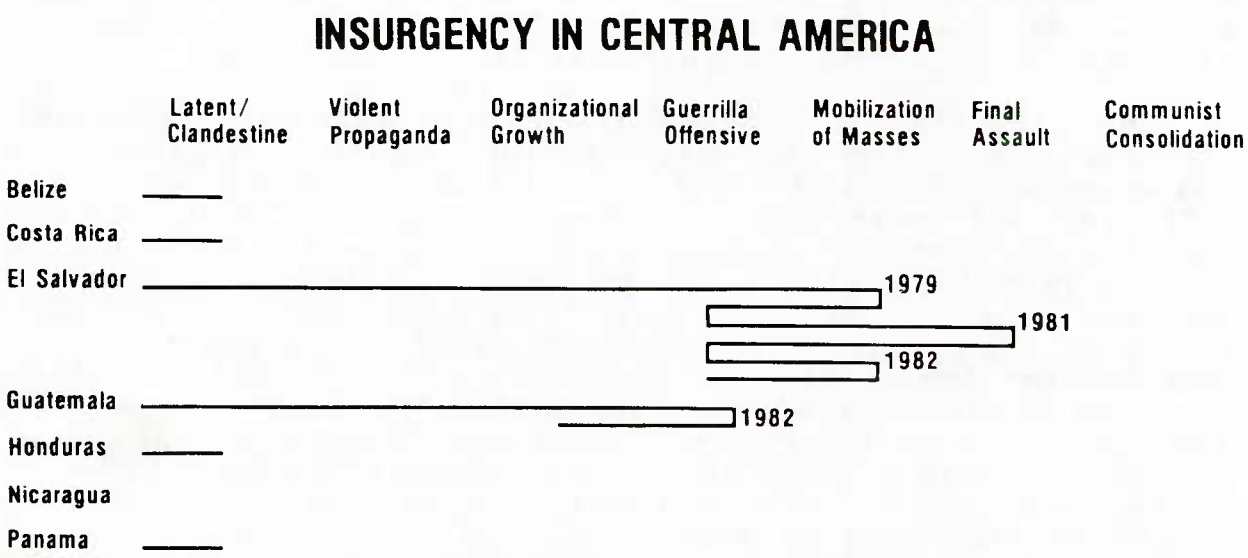

FIGURE 5

These and subsequent military and political culminating points were outlined in an article of The American Journal of International Law which discussed Sandinista support for Central American insurgencies. The article pointed to insurgent culminating points in El Salvador during 1983-84:

> In contrast to Nicaragua, El Salvador had already had a reformist revolution in 1979. Although severe polarization and violence on the far left and far right were endemic, there was no "Somoza." The subsequent free and democratic elections in 1983 and 1984, culminating in President Duarte's strongly reformist and democratic leadership, dealt a severe political blow to the FMLN--which, lacking popular support, has consistently refused to participate in elections.(25)

Perhaps the insurgents' capture of a brigade headquarters and the destruction of a major bridge within the country were efforts to gain the offensive militarily and thus overshadow these political culminating points.

Events in Central and South America following Castro's capture of power in Cuba provide another example of culminating points. Castro's initial efforts to export insurgency culminated with the death of Che Guevara in Bolivia in 1967. This event, coupled with contemporaneous insurgent setbacks in other countries, coincided with economic chaos in Cuba. The resulting humiliating reliance on the Soviet Union made Castro reconsider his dream of waves of revolution sweeping the continent.(26)

However, while insurgencies do falter, they also exhibit such resilience as that exemplified by the long-term nature of the struggle in Guatemala. This and similar insurgencies illustrate that, while the insurgent leadership may not recognize culminating points following a series of tactical or operational setbacks, they often alter their operations to avoid strategic culmination points.

A related consideration is the propensity of insurgents to operate below the threshold of substantial government retaliation. The art of insurgency and terrorism in the early stages of a movement involves sensitizing a government and its people to accept a level of violence. The insurgents know that above this level the government and people totally alter their perception of the threat and undertake to eradicate the movement with a concerted effort. Only after the movement has grown in strength and depth do insurgents escalate the level of violence in an attempt to provoke an over-reaction by the government.

Depth is an element the government forces also require. It is the fourth basic tenet of AirLand Battle. As General Morelli pointed out, "time and distance are factors in assessing the conditions and potential threats and in allocating resources, while the depth of resources--men and materiel--influences the nature of the action taken."(27) Sustainment applies sufficient depth of resources to keep forces in action. It necessitates the application of the orderly business of logistics to evolving operations while creating the infrastructure to change as events dictate. This rule is especially true in LIC in which numerous organizations from different countries are addressing various facets of the threat. Initiative, agility, and synchronization all benefit from depth. But in LIC, depth in thought and will are equally critical. Strategic centers of gravity include depth in willingness and fortitude to make sacrifice when required, to stand by friends and allies, and to continue to prevail with the instruments of power over a long period of time.

An example of operational application of depth from the strategic to tactical level is employment of intelligence in counterinsurgency. The USSOUTHCOM Small Wars Operational Research Directorate's paper entitled "What is to be done--Counterinsurgency" suggests:

> The most critical aspects of the process are the determination of objectives and the detailed threat analysis where enemy vulnerabilities and center(s) of gravity are identified . . . . The art of war approach to direct analysis provides a method for developing appropriate strategies, operational concepts, doctrine, tactics, force structure and capabilities. It focuses on examination of insurgent end, ways, means, vulnerabilities, centers of gravity, and friendly methods for gaining the initiative, exploiting success, and achieving early victory.(28)

At the operational level, which develops the long-term independent campaigns for regions, sub-regions or districts, there is a requirement for a downward or decentralized intelligence focus for brigades and battalion task forces. This means commanders must make collection resources from strategic through operational available in LIC. Those types of intelligence which provide sufficient specificity about guerrilla location and activities are essential to permit the planning and conduct of specific operations. Higher level intelligence organizations provide appropriate national level support, fusion, and coordination assistance at the operational level in traditional combat operations. In LIC and specifically counterinsurgency, sufficient assets are required at the host country's operational level; passing intelligence downward from strategic to tactical as in conventional situations will not serve. Such intelligence is neither timely nor relevant to the effective application of force. The requisite depth in intelligence assets exists when economizing is not required.

The Indirect Approach

While depth is required in other areas to effectively conduct LIC, one area where it is especially important involves the will of the people. The question of US depth in willingness and fortitude to make sacrifice relative to LIC has received much attention. Some believe the Soviet Union`s efforts to move the global correlation of forces increasingly in their favor recognize this lack of depth. They recognize an American Achilles' heel as the broad and deep streak of guilt associated with the use of force in LIC.(29) Ambassador Vernon A. Walters made this precise point when he hypothesized a gameplan discussion that might have occurred following World War II. Mr Walters, in concluding his treatment of Soviet operational art against the US, states:

> It is not that the task is so difficult. But it will require enormous patience, continuity of effort on our side and skill, so that our hand will not be seen and all of the developments we want to bring about in their society will seem natural and normal developmental changes that were inevitable anyway if America was to become a better and more just society. We must study them continuously to see which tactics work and which do not. We must be flexible in out tactics and extraordinarily inflexible in our strategy. Comrades, this is an unique opportunity in history to apply judo tactics. We must use the enemy's strength to get him off-balance and them pin him down. The harder he struggles, the surer will be his fall. But, above all, we must have patience. Time, history and, in the end, the Americans will be on our side if we handle our plans properly. We have a sense of historic inevitability; we know that time works for us.(30)

Typical of this approach is the Soviet attitude of attempting to alter public opinion within the US and its allies through global deception and disinformation. Their use of these techniques in support of operational art in LIC is accomplished as a "total" foreign policy drawing no distinction between diplomatic, economic, psychological, or military means of operations. Richard Pipes, a prominent writer on the Soviet Union and National Security Advisor to President Reagan, believes the KGB may well have a greater voice in foreign policy, especially in the Third World, than the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs.(31)

Thus, the Soviet Union uses such clandestine operations as intelligence collection, counter-intelligence, and covert action to indirectly further their aims. Liddell Hart reviewed the principles of war associated with the indirect approach at length and correlated decisive results with indirect and direct strategic approaches. By examining 30 wars and 280 campaigns up to 1914, he determined that in only six instances did a direct strategic approach lead to a decisive result. However, the indirect strategy invariably lead to success. He concluded the "high proportion of history's decisive campaigns" involving the indirect approach made it the "most hopeful and economic form of strategy."(32)

While Hart's work concentrated on conventional combat, it is appropriate to apply his findings to LIC by reviewing the above discussion concerning role delineation. (Figure 1) In conventional conflict, clearly-defined roles and the high tempo of combat suggest such devices as camouflage and an effective operational and communication security effort are useful. At the operational level, the commander is concerned with such deceptive

actions as movement, feints, and false concentrations of effort. Finally, at the strategic level, the commander employs deception to condition the adversary's theater commander and higher levels of command into misunderstanding the broad approaches he may use in uncovering and attacking their centers of gravity.

In LIC, however, role delineation is less clear. Because the control is at a higher level, the objectives overlap and planning horizons are broader; deception must be capable of influencing several levels simultaneously. Additionally, because LIC involves perceptions of diplomatic, psychosocial, and economic actions, the use of deception must go beyond movement and posturing of forces. Here the psychological factor is critical. Because the tempo is somewhat slower than conventional combat, there is sufficient time for the adversary to analyze and correlate events for potential deception undertones. Thus deception or psychological operations must be very closely integrated into campaigns that aim at specific centers of gravity and so often require extreme sophistication to be effective.

The use of deception by a small "vanguard" of dedicated Marxist-Leninist professionals in Nicaragua provides an illustration of deception in an insurgency. Douglas Payne in an article in Strategic Review entitled "The 'Mantos' of Sandinista Deception," explains how the Sandinistas used deception to shroud their identity and usurp the power of a democratic revolution. Using sophisticated mantos (or cloaks), they integrated the beliefs of nationalism, Christianity, and social democracy into their movement to seize and consolidate power.(33) In May, 1977 the FSLN's political-military platform stated:

> It is a revolutionary war because, using the worker-peasant alliance with the guidance of a Marxist-Leninist vanguard, it will not only oust the Somoza clique but will create the conditions to enable the Sandinista process to progress through the democratic revolutionary phase toward socialism . . . . However, strategic and tactical factors make it impossible, both nationally and internationally, to adopt socialism openly during this phase.(34)

Sophistication of deception or psychological operations is not incompatible with simplicity or complexity of effort. In fact, some very sophisticated programs have used extremely simple themes. These themes have usually resulted when their originators set forth clearly-defined objectives. An additional consideration is the consequences or impact on the overall campaign as a result of either a successful or unsuccessful deception or psychological effort. Commanders often consider the consequences of only unsuccessful efforts and fail to recognize adversaries may react to successful deceptions in a manner either unforeseen or compatible with short but not necessarily long term interests. These concepts, whether from a defensive or offensive

perspective, have a role in helping to establish both short and long term objectives.

Liddell Hart suggests the indirect approach applies to the defensive as well as the offensive situation. He states the essence of the indirect approach is psychological and quotes Lenin, "The soundest strategy in war is to postpone operations until the moral disintegration of the enemy renders the delivery of the mortal blow both possible and easy."(35) Richard Shultz and Roy Godson, in their book, Dezinformatsia Active Measures in Soviet Strategy, point out how Lenin's indirect approach continues to be the ploy of commanders. In discussing the indirect approach, the two authors state:

> Throughout history, both in peacetime and during time of conflict, nations have included among their policy options the use of propaganda, diplomacy, and political action to influence attitudes and behavior in foreign lands. When a state is faced with an adversary willing to devote massive resources to carefully orchestrated campaigns of overt and covert political warfare, unilateral restraint and failure to use a comparable variety of available instruments could lead to serious political and security setbacks.(36)

This concept is described as "statecraft" by Adda Bozeman who suggests it has been a part of conflict between nations since ancient civilization. Bozeman in the article, "Covert Action and Foreign Policy," discusses statecraft in ancient societies of south and West Asia and North Africa. When she moves into discussing relatively modern times, she cautions against strategic thought founded on ethno-centric considerations. After all, the US contains a culturally unique society with a heritage not fully shared by all people.(37) Because LIC often pits the US against adversaries steeped in Marxist-Leninist thought and practice, it is in the US interest to pay heed to Soviet traditions of statecraft rather than merely to view the world only through the visions of the US.

Covert actions, as part of good statecraft applied in conjunction with military action, can be critical to developing effective lines of operation. Unfortunately, as a result of public aversion to these activities, disclosure often results in an unexpected operational culminating point.

Culminating points in LIC are subtle and have few traditional measures of merit. The resultant question of "what is winning" often arises. Differing from higher levels of conflict in which measures of merit are definable in a kind of deceptive geometry in finite time and space, objectives in LIC take non-geographic dimensions and need extended planning. Operational planners must develop measures of merit appropriate to the conflict and must

also sensitize the values of decision-makers on the criteria of success. In LIC, they must home in on "the hearts and minds of the populace." "Body counts," for example, should pertain to "how many remain," not how many insurgents the counterinsurgency forces have killed. Methods to reduce that number include granting amnesty to the insurgents, government reforms to build legitimacy, and waging effective psychological operations to make the populace aware of the government's action. Intangibles can be very important in establishing these measures of merit, while counterinsurgency forces often use changes in the numbers of defectors. However, such a reckoning does not allow for those members who simply lay down their weapons and go home. Commanders and planners should understand this factor when they are establishing measures of effect.

In an open society, the insurgents can use the number and size of public demonstrations or riots as measures of merit. The frequency and severity of these demonstrations or riots are acceptable indicators of insurgent strength. The targeting of government leaders responsible for effective programs can also be a measure of merit. The level and nature of violence the insurgents inflict can provide ironic measures of merit. An interesting comparison of violence in different levels of conflict appeared in a Military Review article. The author suggested understanding violence could be a stumbling block for the west. In a conventional war, violence is expected as a necessary evil in accomplishing strategic aims. However, in LIC, "the violence seems to occur in inverse proportion to the accomplishment of strategic aims." He saw escalating violence, ironically, as the best indicator of progress and believes to gain wide spread attention and support for wavering causes, insurgent forces often are driven to such desperate measures as assassination, open armed attack, and even mass suicide.(38)

Thus, commanders and operational planners must look for seemingly unrelated events or the absence of patterns in developing measures of merit in LIC. They need to visualize the requirements of their strategic goals in conditions of far greater uncertainty than in conventional operations. Both short and intermediate-term policies can then be integrated into the long-term strategic objectives.

Conclusion

This discussion does not provide a "cookbook approach" to the application of operational art in LIC. It does, however, provide a construct designed to provoke thought concerning such application.

The operational planner must design a comprehensive plan that systematically links the seemingly isolated activities that will lead to the fulfillment of the strategic objective. Using such concepts as centers of gravity, lines of operation, sequels,

branches, and culminating points, the planner can determine the broad perspective required for a theater-level campaign plan for LIC to yield meaningful solutions to problems. Understanding the differences between conventional and low intensity conflict as they relate to these concepts is helpful. Such is the case of center of gravity analysis as it relates to insurgency and counterinsurgency. The application of the unique aspects of "shared" centers of gravity as they relate to a particular conflict can be helpful in developing appropriate objectives and lines of operation to attack those objectives.

Critical to developing those lines is a plan that recognizes the offensive and defensive phases of the struggle and then marshals and commits resources in a sequence to achieve those objectives. The use of the indirect approach is also important in the development of lines of operation. In LIC this approach, while useful, is difficult to achieve because of the myriad of agencies and organizations involved in building consensus for a theater-level campaign plan and the subordinate plans. Thus, all subordinate plans must have linkage to the overall plan so that actions are related and effective.

The environment in which these plans must be executed is indeed dynamic. Therefore, the plans themselves and the military forces required to execute them must have the flexibility to adapt to the uncertainties ahead. Then, and only then, can we achieve the necessary unity of effort required for the US to be successful in dealing with low intensity conflict.

APPENDIX A

These charts were prepared by Barton Whaley in 1969 and appear in, Strategem Deception and Surprise in War (See Footnote 19).

Principles of War, c. 350 B.C. to A.D. 1968

Order of Priority

Theoretician	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Sun Tzu[1,2] 4th Cent.B.C.	Objective	Offensive	Surprise	Concentration	Mobility	Coordination			
Vegetius[1] ca. 390 A.D.	Mobility	Security	Surprise	Offensive					
Saxe[2] 1757	Mobility	Morale	Security	Surprise					
Napoleon[2] 1822	Objective	Offensive	Mass	Movement	Surprise	Security			
Clausewitz [1,2] 1832	Objective	Offensive	Concentration	Economy of Force	Mobility	Surprise			
Jomini[1] 1836	Objective	Movement	Concentration	Offensive	Diversion				
P.L. MacDougall[2] 1858	Mass	Direction							
N.B. Forrest[2] 1864	Mass	Direction	Rapidity	Offensive					
Fuller[2] 1912	Objective	Mass	Offensive	Security	Surprise	Movement			
Stalin[4] 1918 [-1947]	Stability of the Rear	Morale	Quality and Quantity	Armament	Organizing Ability of Commanders	Surprise			

Principles of War, c. 350 B.C. to A.D. 1968 (continued)

Order of Priority

Theoretician	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Foch[1] 1918	Offensive	Economy of Force	Freedom of Action	Free Disposal of Forces	Security				
C.V.F.Townshend[2] 1920	Objective	Economy of Force	Mass	Offensive	Direction	Security			
U.S. War Dept., Training Regulations, No. 10-5[2] 1921	Objective	Offensive	Mass	Economy of Force	Movement	Surprise	Security	Simplicity	Cooperation
Fuller[2] 1925	Direction	Offensive	Surprise	Concentra-tion	Distribu-tion	Security	Mobility	Endurance	Determin-ation
Liddell Hart[1] 1929	Objective	Movement	Surprise						
U.S. Command and General Staff School[2] 1936	Offensive	Concentra-tion	Economy of Force	Mobility	Surprise	Security	Coopera-tion		
Mao[1] 1938	Political Objective	Mobility	Offensive	Defensive	Concentra-tion	Surprise			

Principles of War, c. 350 B.C. to A.D. 1968 (continued)

Order of Priority

Theoretician	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
U.S. Army FM 100-5[1] 1941, 1944	Objective	Simplicity	Unity of Command	Offensive	Concentration of Superior Force	Surprise	Security		
Cyril Falls[2] c. 1945	Economy of Force	Protection	Surprise	Aggressive Reconnaissance	Maintenance of the Aim				
Liddell Hart[1] 1954(-1967)	Alternative Objectives	Movement	Surprise						
Giap[1,3] 1960	Political Objective	Speed	Surprise	Morale	Security	Cooperation			
Guevara[1] 1960	Objective	Mobility	Surprise						
Montgomery[1] 1968	Surprise	Concentration of of effort	Cooperation of all Arms	Control	Simplicity	Speed of Action	The Initiative		
U.S. Army FM 100-5[1] 1962(-1968)	Objective	Offensive	Mass	Economy of Force	Maneuver	Command Unity of	Security	Surprise	Simplicity

Sources:

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3. Tanham (67), 74-78.
4. Garthoff (53), 34.

FOOTNOTES

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